

Teachers' beliefs about oral corrective feedback: a comparison of secondary and adult education

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Abstract: Although there is a large number of studies showing the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback (CF) for second language acquisition, it is not clear to what extent teachers believe in its usefulness. A few survey studies have found that students want to be corrected much more than their teachers believe to be desirable. However, other aspects of oral CF, such as CF-types and timing, have hardly received any attention in those studies. Therefore, the present study compares the views of private language school and secondary school EFL teachers about questions such as: how to correct students, when to correct them and what types of errors to correct. Despite the difference in teaching context, both groups of teachers largely agreed that CF is important, but that too many corrections might interfere with fluency development and students' confidence. Most of the teachers also seemed to prefer more implicit types of CF. These findings point to the need for more teacher training on oral CF.

Keywords: oral corrective feedback; beliefs; attitudes; EFL.

Resumen: Aunque existe un gran número de estudios que demuestran la eficacia del *feedback* oral para la adquisición de una segunda lengua, no está claro hasta qué punto los profesores creen que el *feedback* es útil. Algunos estudios han mostrado que los alumnos generalmente quieren que se les corrija mucho más de lo que sus profesores estiman necesario. Sin embargo, otros aspectos relacionados con el *feedback* oral, como por ejemplo los tipos de *feedback* y el momento adecuado de dar *feedback*, han recibido muy poca atención en dichos estudios. Por eso, el presente estudio compara las creencias de dos grupos de profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre: cuándo corregir, cuánto corregir y qué tipos de errores corregir. A pesar de las diferencias de contexto, los dos grupos estaban de acuerdo en que el *feedback* es importante, pero que demasiadas correcciones pueden interferir con el desarrollo de la fluidez y la confianza de los alumnos. La mayoría de los profesores también preferían tipos más implícitos de *feedback*. Estos resultados indican que existe la necesidad de incrementar la formación del profesorado en el tema del *feedback* oral.

Palabras clave: *Feedback* oral; creencias, actitudes; inglés como lengua extranjera.

I. Introduction

Even though scholars such as Krashen (1982) and Truscott (1999) advise against correcting learners' spoken errors, the last twenty years have produced a substantial number of experimental studies which support the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback (CF) for the acquisition of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation (Lyster, Saito & Sato, 2013). Apart from experimental studies, there are a number of observational studies which show that teachers tend to give oral feedback to their students, although the quantity and types of feedback given differ depending on teaching contexts and even on individual teachers (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lochtman, 2002; Loewen & Philp, 2006). A recurrent finding in such studies is that teachers tend to use one type of feedback, namely recasts, much more than any other (Sheen, 2004). At the same time, it has been suggested that learners may benefit from more explicit ways of correcting, as well as from receiving a variety of feedback types on their oral errors (Lyster & Saito, 2010).

To find out why teachers provide corrective feedback in this way, it is necessary to look at their attitudes and beliefs. According to Borg (2003), teachers' beliefs can influence their classroom practice, although the two do not always correspond. As far as teachers' and students' beliefs about corrective feedback are concerned, it is generally assumed that there is a mismatch between the two, since some studies have shown that students want to be corrected much more than their teachers believe to be desirable (e.g., Jean & Simard, 2011; Schulz, 2001). However, these findings are based on a small number of studies, which have usually been conducted within an ESL context and have not taken into account certain aspects of corrective feedback. Moreover, Schulz (2001) and Jean and Simard (2011) focused on beliefs about grammar instruction and only included a few questions related to corrective feedback.

The present study focuses exclusively on oral corrective feedback, including issues related to types of CF and affective responses to CF. Moreover, since beliefs about teaching and learning may also vary according to context (Borg, 2003), this study includes both secondary school EFL teachers and EFL teachers working in adult education. To the best of our knowledge, no study on beliefs about CF has compared the attitudes of these two groups of teachers. The results of this study may be of interest to teachers who want to learn more about the different options at their disposal for providing oral CF, and who want to reflect on their own CF practice. The study also hopes to inform teacher trainers about the need for further training on this important aspect of foreign language teaching.

II. Research on oral CF

1. *The effects of oral CF on second language acquisition*

Since Lyster and Ranta (1997) published their seminal study on oral corrective feedback, a considerable number of studies have investigated if oral corrective feedback positively affects the acquisition of grammar and, to a lesser extent, vocabulary and pronunciation. Most of these studies focus on one or two specific grammar items such as the past tense (Doughty & Varela, 1998) or articles (Sheen, 2007). They have been carried out in either laboratory or classroom settings and have typically investigated the provision of immediate oral CF during meaning-focused activities such as storytelling tasks. These studies have given rise to various meta-analyses, which conclude that oral CF has positive effects on second language acquisition (Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006). However, disagreement still exists about which type of correction works best. The type of oral CF which has been investigated the most is recasts, i.e. «the teacher's reformulation of all or part of the student's utterance, minus the error» (Lyster & Ranta, 1997: 46). Although Mackey and Goo's (2007) meta-analysis of 28 studies shows that recasts are effective, Lyster and Saito's (2010) meta-analysis of 15 classroom-based studies indicates larger effects for prompts, a group of CF-types which induce the learner to self-correct his or her error.

However, both input-providing CF-types such as recasts and output-pushing types or prompts can be more or less explicit. Recasts are generally described as the most implicit type of CF, but they can be more explicit if they are reduced and/or stressed (Ellis & Sheen, 2006). In the case of prompts, clarification requests are much more implicit than metalinguistic feedback (also called metalinguistic clues). Research comparing implicit to explicit CF tends to find larger effects for the explicit types (Sheen, 2007; Yilmaz, 2012), although researchers such as Li (2010) suggest that implicit CF may have larger effects in the long term. Table 1 provides a classification of oral CF-types with examples of possible reactions to a past tense error (see example below). It is important to note that degree of explicitness is a continuum, and that it is possible to classify some types, for instance, elicitation, as more explicit.

Example of past tense error:

- Teacher: What did you do last weekend?
- Student: I watch a film with my friends.

Table 1: Classification of CF-types with examples

	Input-providing (reformulations)	Output-pushing (prompts)
Implicit	<i>Recast</i> : Oh, you watched a film. Which one?	<i>Clarification request</i> : I'm sorry? <i>Repetition</i> : I WATCH a film? <i>Elicitation</i> : Last weekend, I...?
Explicit	<i>Reduced recast</i> : watched <i>Explicit correction</i> : No, not watch, watched.	<i>Metalinguistic feedback/clue</i> : You need to use the past tense.

2. Research on oral CF practices and beliefs

The term «teacher's beliefs» (also «teacher cognition») refers to the complex system of beliefs, knowledge and attitudes which teachers possess and which potentially influence their classroom practice (Borg, 2003). While beliefs can influence practices, they are not always acted upon by teachers, since several contextual factors can stand in the way, for instance school policies and curriculum mandates, but also internal factors such as teachers' knowledge and self-awareness (Borg, 2003; Buehl & Beck, 2015). Teachers' attitudes have been found to be shaped by a combination of factors such as practical experience, but also the teachers' own experience as language learners (Borg, 2003). The study of teachers' beliefs can help researchers gain insight in the decisions teachers make in the classroom. It is also vital that teacher training programmes take teacher cognition into account, since research has found that for teaching practice to change, one first needs to address teachers' beliefs, which are resistant to change (Baily, 1992; Golombek, 1998).

As stated in the Introduction, a number of studies have observed teachers' oral CF practices, sometimes in combination with interviews or questionnaires to compare their practices to their beliefs. While it is generally agreed that most teachers rely heavily on recasts (Havranek, 2002; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Sheen, 2004), and use other types of CF far less frequently, in some specific settings researchers actually found the reverse trend. For instance, in Lochtman's (2002) study of German as a foreign-language classes in Belgian secondary schools, the teachers mainly used prompts.

Studies focusing exclusively on attitudes and beliefs about oral CF are few in number and have mostly been conducted in ESL contexts. A general questionnaire study on teachers' beliefs about foreign language teaching carried out by Bell (2005) with teachers of French, German and Spanish in the United

States included several items related to corrective feedback. Bell (2005) noted that corrective feedback seemed to be an aspect which caused considerable disagreement among teachers. For instance, on the question of whether foreign language learners should be corrected when making grammar mistakes, 34% agreed, 36% disagreed and 28% were not sure. On the other hand, the majority of respondents in Bell's (2005) study disagreed with the statement that it is essential to correct most errors.

A study which focused exclusively on beliefs about oral corrective feedback is Cathcart and Olsen (1976), who compared the attitudes of ESL students and teachers in higher education in the US. These authors found that students expressed a wish to be corrected all the time, which most teachers did not agree with. Some differences were also found between teachers' and students' views towards CF-types. For instance, explicit correction was viewed more negatively by the teachers than by the students. Schulz (2001) found a similar mismatch between teachers and students with regard to how often they want to be corrected in her study of university teachers and students in Colombia and the US. While this author found some cultural differences regarding the importance of grammar instruction, agreement about the importance of error correction was high between Colombian and American students, on the one hand, and Colombian and American teachers on the other hand.

A fourth questionnaire study carried out in an ESL context is Jean and Simard's (2011), whose findings confirm that students expect to be corrected much more than teachers are inclined to do. In an EFL context (private language schools in Iran), Rahimi and Zhang (2015) surveyed 20 novice and 20 experienced teachers of English regarding their beliefs about oral CF and carried out follow-up interviews with 10 participants. They found that inexperienced teachers were significantly less inclined to correct spoken errors than experienced teachers, and inexperienced teachers also claimed to favour more indirect types of oral CF such as recasts. Experienced teachers, in contrast, believed in using a range of CF-types, depending on the students' level, students' anxiety and types of errors. With regards to CF timing, the inexperienced teachers did not believe in interrupting students with immediate CF. Rahimi and Zhang's (2015) study thus shows that teacher factors such as their experience may influence their beliefs about oral CF. Instead of using surveys, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) used a focus group of 11 undergraduate students and 10 teachers, who offered their views about oral CF based on a videotaped lesson. Both the teachers and the students in this study appeared to believe that oral CF can cause negative emotional reactions from students and that teachers should, thus, take care of when and how they correct errors.

Yoshida (2010) observed two language teachers at a university in Australia and conducted stimulated-recall interviews with them. Similar to the teachers in Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005), these teachers expressed their concern that CF can cause embarrassment or anxiety, and therefore they preferred implicit CF. Critics of oral CF such as Truscott (1999) also warn about the possibility of some students getting frustrated or embarrassed as a result of being corrected when speaking in the target language. However, despite these concerns voiced by scholars and teachers, hardly any CF-studies have taken affective factors into account. To the best of our knowledge, only one survey study has investigated the possible relationship between students' affect and their beliefs about CF: Zhang and Rahimi (2014). These authors compared the beliefs about oral CF of a group of high and low anxiety students, and concluded that there were not many differences between the two groups.

Other aspects of error correction which may be of interest to teachers include the right moment to provide CF, either immediately or after finishing a communicative activity. In their case study of three teachers' oral CF beliefs and practices at a language school in New Zealand, Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis (2004) found that all three teachers preferred not to correct students in the middle of communicative activities, unless the meaning of the message was compromised. As explained above, the novice teachers in Rahimi and Zhang's (2015) study had similar beliefs about CF timing. However, as discussed in section II.1, all experimental studies have investigated the impact of immediate CF, while no study so far has looked at the effects of delayed CF on language development.

There is clearly a need for more studies on teachers' and students' attitudes towards CF, which address important questions such as the effectiveness of different CF-types, affective responses to CF and the right time to provide CF. Moreover, as far as we are aware, no study has directly compared teachers and students in secondary and post-secondary education in an EFL context. The different ages and maturity levels of the students, as well as the obligatory versus the non-obligatory character of each educational level can potentially affect the views of teachers and students regarding error correction. For instance, it could be hypothesized that adult students, who tend to be more motivated to learn the L2 (Kormos & Csisér, 2008), would display more positive attitudes towards oral CF than teenage students. Similarly, it is possible that teachers of adult students, working in private language schools, have different attitudes regarding CF than teachers working in secondary education. Therefore, this study compares the views of language school teachers and secondary school teachers regarding how often, when and how students'

spoken errors should be corrected. The main research question guiding this study is thus:

What are EFL teachers' attitudes to oral corrective feedback, and is there a difference between teachers working in adult education (language school teachers) and those working with secondary school students (secondary school teachers)?

This question can be divided into three sub-questions:

Sub-question 1: Do language school teachers and secondary school teachers believe it is important to provide oral CF, and what do they think their students' expectations are regarding oral CF?

Sub-question 2: What are language school teachers' and secondary school teachers' beliefs about oral CF-types, the preferred target of oral CF and the timing of oral CF?

Sub-question 3: Which factors do language school teachers and secondary school teachers believe have the greatest impact on their oral CF practice?

III. Methodology

1. *Participants*

The participants are 54 teachers, 31 language school teachers versus 23 secondary school teachers, working in six different secondary schools and six private language schools in Spain. The teachers' personal background data are presented in Table 2. It can be noted that the teachers in both settings vary considerably according to their ages, teaching experience and qualifications. In both settings, the majority of the teachers are native speakers of Spanish, but in the language school teacher group there are considerably more English native speaker teachers. Another important difference is related to the teachers' qualifications. Twelve of the language school teachers have a *Cambridge Celta* certificate, while 11 have a degree in philology or education and five teachers did not report having any specific preparation to teach English. In the secondary schools, most of the teachers have a degree in English philology and/or education. Another striking difference lies in the average number of students per class, which is much higher in secondary schools.

Table 2: Background information about teachers

	Language school teachers (n=31)	Secondary school teachers (n=23)
Gender	14 male, 14 female, 3 unknown	8 male, 11 female, 4 unknown
Age	Between 24 and 57, mean age 38	Between 24 and 59, mean age 43.5
Mother tongue	14 Spanish, 12 English, 5 other	19 Spanish, 3 English, 1 other
Years of experience	Between 1 and 23 years, mean 9.2 years	Between 1 and 38 years, mean 18.3 years
Qualifications	12 Celta, 5 philology, 6 education, 8 other	6 philology, 8 education, 4 other, 5 unknown
No of students per class	Between 4 and 25, mean 8.2	Between 8 and 34, mean 23.8

2. Instrument

The data on teachers' beliefs were collected by means of a questionnaire consisting of five closed-ended Likert-type questions and four open-ended questions. Part of the questions were adapted from previous survey studies (Catchcart & Olsen 1976, Schulz 2001), in particular the question about CF-types, while others were written in response to gaps in the research on oral CF, for example, a question regarding students' affective responses to corrections and a question about how to deal with errors during different classroom activities. After piloting a first version of the questionnaire with 11 teachers, we decided to change the scale for the closed-ended questions from a three-point to a four-point scale in order to allow for more nuanced answers and to add more space for comments.

Since the open-ended questions were not adapted, we decided to include eight language school teachers from the pilot study who had answered these questions in the analysis. (As the scale of the Likert-type questions on the pilot questionnaire was a three-point scale, these eight language school teachers' answers to the closed-ended questions were not included). This means that there were slightly more teachers responding to the open-ended questions, namely 31 language school teachers versus 23 secondary school teachers, than teachers responding to the closed-ended questions, i.e., 23 teachers in each group.

3. *Data collection and analysis*

The teachers who responded to the questionnaire were contacted through the researcher's professional network. They were all volunteers and they either completed the questionnaire on paper or they e-mailed an electronic version to the researcher.

The answers to the closed-ended questions were introduced into a database and analysed statistically with Excel and Vassarstats (*www.vassarstats.net*). For the questions in which a 4-point scale was employed, the mean and standard deviation was calculated in Excel and Mann-Whitney tests were computed in Vassarstats in order to compare different groups. The Mann-Whitney test is described as the non-parametric alternative to an independent-samples t-test (Larson-Hall, 2010). Since a four-point Likert-type scale was used in this study, we are dealing with ordinal data (Larson-Hall, 2010) and one of the assumptions of the t-test, i.e. that «the scale of measurement for both samples has the properties of an equal interval scale» (*vassarstats.net/textbook*), has been violated. For this reason it is advisable to use the Mann Whitney U-test instead (see also Hatch & Lazaraton 1991; Brown, 1988). For all calculations, the significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$ and the p -values reported are the results of a two-tailed test.

The answers to the open-ended questions were analysed qualitatively following the method of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Zacharias, 2012). For each question, the answers of the respondents were compared, so that recurrent themes could be identified. Answers were also colour-coded according to whether they expressed positive, negative or mixed attitudes. An answer was coded as positive when it contained only positive adjectives and verbs, such as «grateful, happy, appreciate», while negative words such as «not helpful, demotivating, embarrassed» were interpreted as indicative of a negative attitude. Finally, mixed attitudes are those that express both positive and negative views, for instance: «The majority are happy to receive it. There might be some students that do not accept correction very well.» The frequency of occurrence of the different themes was then calculated. Unfortunately, the data could only be coded by one rater, so interrater reliability could not be established.

IV. Results

1. General attitudes to oral CF and beliefs about students' attitudes

First of all, we present the analysis of the answers to the following open-ended questions:

- Do you think it is important to give students feedback on language mistakes when they speak? Why/why not?
- Do you think your students expect to get feedback on their oral mistakes?
- How do you think your students feel when you give them feedback on their oral mistakes?

As mentioned in III.3, the respondents' answers were coded and divided into three categories: positive, negative and mixed views. Examples of each category are provided below. When considering all 54 teachers, regardless of their teaching context, we found that more than half of them (55.6%) expressed reservations about the importance of oral CF, which puts them in the «mixed views» category. Thirteen teachers (24%) voiced a concern for possible negative affective responses in their students and 11 (20%) referred to the importance of promoting fluency rather than accuracy when practicing speaking, as illustrated by the following quote by a language school teacher:

- (1) *It is essential, in my opinion, to prioritize fluency instead of grammar/vocabulary perfection.*

A few teachers also referred to students' personalities as having an impact on their CF-practice:

- (2) *I think it is better to combine. Not to correct when you are working on fluency. And correct in other moments. Also depending on the student, if he is a shy student or not etc.*

If we look at the teachers' views according to the setting they teach in (secondary versus language school), it appears that the majority in both groups also expressed mixed views about oral CF, as Table 3 shows.

However, as Table 3 indicates, a higher percentage of secondary school teachers offered an entirely positive answer to this question: only 32.3% of the language school teachers displayed a completely positive attitude to correction, compared to 43.5% of the secondary school teachers.

Table 3: Teachers' beliefs about the importance of providing their students with CF on speaking

Language school teachers	Secondary school teachers
Negative: 1/31 (3.2%)	Negative: 1/23 (4.3%)
Positive: 10/31 (32.3%)	Positive: 10/23 (43.5%)
Mixed: 19/31 (61.3%)	Mixed 11/23 (47.8%)
Other: 1/31 (3.2%)	Other: 0/23 (0%)
No answer: 0/31 (0%)	No answer: 1/23 (4.3%)

A clear majority of the language school teachers thus manifested a mixture of positive and negative beliefs about feedback, as exemplified in the following quotes:

- (3) *It is important at intermediate levels and beyond. This is a personal opinion but is based on my experience. If you keep interrupting beginners when they speak, this might discourage them, make them feel too self-conscious and therefore result in students being reluctant to speak*
- (4) *Yes but not in a way that will hinder the pace of the lesson. I prefer to do it after they speak as a group so as not to focus on individual mistakes.*

In the case of the secondary school teachers, on the other hand, this mixed view was only slightly more prominent than the positive attitude of these teachers, which is exemplified below:

- (5) *Yes, I think [feedback is important]. I understand they need a guidance to be able to improve their productions. When if not?*
- (6) *It is important to help them improve their spoken English.*

Finally, completely negative views of the importance of CF were rare in both contexts. There was only one teacher in each group who replied negatively to the first question:

- (7) *No, as I want them to speak fearless.* (Secondary school teacher)
- (8) *No, I do this at the end of the speaking session.* (Language school teacher)

In fact, the last teacher only seems to be opposed to immediate feedback, but not to feedback in general.

Despite some doubts about the benefits of oral CF expressed by most of the teachers, almost all of them believed their students expect to be corrected. As can be seen in Table 4, 33 of the 53 teachers replied «yes» to the question of wheth-

er they thought their students expected to get feedback on their oral mistakes, and only four teachers replied negatively. The remaining 15 believed their students want to be corrected, but with some reservations, as illustrated in responses such as «yes, but not always» or «yes, however it's not always welcomed by the weakest students». Table 4 shows a comparison of the answers given by language school and secondary school teachers. Note that one secondary school teacher did not answer this question and another one gave an unclear answer. Interestingly, a clear majority of the language school teachers (77.4%) believed their students want to be corrected, while in the case of the secondary school teachers 40.9% answered positively and another 40.9% expressed some doubts about their students' willingness to be corrected. Although in both groups nearly all teachers stated their students want to be corrected («yes» or «yes, but»), slightly more secondary school teachers than language school teachers stated their students do not want to be corrected (13.6% versus 3.2%), as Table 4 shows.

Table 4: Teachers' beliefs about their students' expectations to be corrected

Language school teachers	Secondary school teachers
Yes: 24/31 (77.4%)	Yes: 9/22 (40.9%)
Yes, but...: 6/31 (19.4%)	Yes, but...: 9/22 (40.9%)
No: 1/31 (3.2%)	No: 3/22 (13.6%)
Other: 0/31 (0%)	Other: 1/22 (4.5%)

As mentioned above, 13 of the 54 teachers already referred to the issue of emotional responses to feedback when discussing how important they think error correction is. The third open-ended question explicitly asked teachers to state how they think their students feel when they are corrected. The teachers' replies were again grouped into three categories according to whether they referred to only positive feelings, only negative feelings or a mixture of both.

As shown in Table 3, the secondary school teachers tended to be slightly more positive about the benefits of oral feedback than their colleagues working in private language schools. Table 5 displays the classification of the two groups of teachers' beliefs about their students' emotional responses to feedback. The results in Table 5 reveal an even clearer difference between the two groups, as 43.5% of the secondary school teachers estimated their students would react positively to being corrected while speaking, whereas only 22.6% of the language school teachers felt the same way. Some of the positive reactions anticipated by the secondary school teachers include: «They are pleased to be helped», they

feel «fine» and «comfortable». The vast majority of the language school teachers were apparently not so sure their feedback is accepted so willingly, as the following statements, classified as «mixed» in Table 5, indicate:

- (9) *Adults appreciate it very much. But too many corrections can be frustrating.*
- (10) *Depending on the student he might be grateful, feel ashamed or something in between.*

On the other hand, slightly more secondary school teachers expected their students to react negatively to feedback (four of the 23 secondary school teachers versus only one language school teacher). For instance, one teacher wrote: «they don't like it if they are in front of the class», whereas another reaction referred to the students' preoccupation with getting a bad mark: «they feel that their mark might decrease».

Table 5: Teachers' beliefs about how their students feel when they are corrected

Language school teachers	Secondary school teachers
Completely positive: 7/31 (22.6%)	Completely positive: 10/23 (43.5%)
Completely negative: 1/31 (3.2%)	Completely negative: 4/23 (17.4%)
Mixed: 21/31 (67.7%)	Mixed 6/23 (26.1%)
It depends: 2/31 (6.5%)	It depends: 2/23 (8.7%)
No answer: 0/31 (0%)	No answer: 1/23 (4.3%)

2. Attitudes regarding CF-types, error-types and timing of CF

We now turn to the analysis of the closed-ended questions, which deal with the effectiveness of different CF-types, the types of errors teachers believe they should focus on, how to provide CF during various classroom activities and the factors that might influence the amount and type of CF provided.

a) Attitudes to CF-types

To find out what types of CF teachers believe to be effective, the respondents were asked to rate seven examples of oral CF on a 4-point scale, ranging from «very effective» to «not effective»(see Table 6). Rather than giving them the names of the CF-types, they were shown the examples dealing with a past

tense error that can be found in Table 1. For the quantitative analysis of the data, «very effective» was given the value of 4 and «not effective» the value of 1. Table 6 displays the means and standard deviations for each CF-type. The higher the mean, the more positive the rating the CF-type received.

Table 6: Language school teachers' (LT) and secondary school teachers' (ST) beliefs about feedback types

	Mean LT's (n=23)	SD LT's	Mean ST's (n=23)	SD ST's	Mann Whitney U	p-value (two-tailed)
Explicit correction	2.05	0.90	2.05	0.74	241	0.8181
Recasts	2.57	1.08	2.91	1.12	196.5	0.2937
Partial recasts	2.52	0.98	2.27	0.88	260.5	0.4839
Clarification requests	2.33	1.02	2.22	0.67	253.5	0.7872
Metalinguistic feedback	2.67	0.97	2.17	1.07	305.5	0.1362
Elicitation	3.14	0.77	2.65	0.83	333	0.0703
Repetition	2.32	1.09	2.04	0.82	285	0.4715

As Table 6 shows, the language school teachers gave the most positive rating to elicitation, an output-pushing type of oral CF, while the secondary school teachers rated recasts as the most effective CF-type. However, a Mann Whitney U test revealed no significant differences between the two groups for any of the CF-types, even though the difference for elicitation was nearly significant ($p=0.0703$), with language school teachers giving a higher rating to elicitation than secondary school teachers.

The types of CF that received the lowest ratings were explicit correction for the language school teachers, and repetition and explicit correction for the secondary school teachers (see Table 6). When the standard deviations are taken into account, Table 6 shows that elicitation has the lowest standard deviation for the language school teachers, which implies close agreement between the individual teachers about the effectiveness of this technique. The secondary school teachers, on the other hand, gave the highest rating to recasts, but there were no significant differences with the language school teachers' evaluation of this technique. When the high standard deviations for recasts are considered (1.08 and 1.12), it can also be noted that recasts provoked a range of reactions from individual teachers.

b) *Attitudes to error-types*

Table 7 presents the results of the comparison of the two groups of teachers' reactions to the question of which error types they tended to provide feedback on. The teachers were asked how often they give individual students feedback on different types of mistakes, rating them from «usually» to «never». For example, if they usually correct grammar errors, this would correspond to a value of 4, and if they never correct pronunciation errors, it would correspond to a value of 1. Apart from grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary errors, the categories were: «when they make a mistake against a structure we have just studied», «when they make mistakes against something I think they should know» and «when the mistake makes the student's message difficult to understand.» Looking at Table 7, we can observe that both groups of teachers gave very high ratings to mistakes which interfere with understanding. On the other hand, grammar errors were rated as less important by both language school and secondary school teachers. It can also be noted in Table 7 that only one significant difference between the two groups was found: the secondary school teachers rated pronunciation errors significantly higher than the academy teachers did.

Table 7: Language school teachers' (LT) and secondary school teachers' (ST) opinions about error types

	Mean LT (n=23)	SD LT	Mean ST (n=23)	SD STs	Mann Whitney U	p-value (two-tailed)
Grammar	2.91	0.87	3.00	0.82	227	0.7339
Pronunciation	2.83	0.65	3.32	0.78	345	0.0375
Vocabulary	3.26	0.75	3.38	0.86	269.5	0.5157
Just studied	3.74	0.54	3.43	0.75	187.5	0.2077
Should know	3.40	0.72	3.05	0.84	195.5	0.1971
Difficult to understand	3.70	0.56	3.73	0.55	261	0.865

c) *Giving CF during various classroom activities*

Table 8 presents the results of the teachers' preferred reactions to students' spoken errors in various situations such as class discussions, pair work or class correction of a grammar exercise. As indicated in Table 8, the teachers were pro-

vided with the following options for dealing with a possible learner error in the given situation: they could choose to ignore the error or treat it, either immediately or after the activity, or they could opt for correction only if the error interfered with communication. Finally the option «it depends» was also included, with the possibility of providing further explanation in a comments box.

Table 8. Secondary school teachers' (ST) and language school teachers' (LT) attitudes to CF in various situations

Situations	No feedback	Only if the message is not clear	Immediate feedback	Feedback after the activity	It depends
1. A student expresses his/her opinion during a class discussion	1 ST 0 LT	14 ST 8 LT	2 ST 1 LT	3 ST 5 LT	1 ST 5 LT
2. Students are discussing a topic in pairs or small groups	4 ST 2 LT	5 ST 5 LT	3 ST 1 LT	4 ST 11 LT	6 ST 1 LT
3. A student asks you a question in front of the whole class	1 ST 2 LT	4 ST 4 LT	8 ST 10 LT	1 ST 1 LT	7 ST 3 LT
4. A student answers a question about a text you are discussing as a class	1 ST 0 LT	4 ST 5 LT	8 ST 11 LT	1 ST 1 LT	7 ST 3 LT
5. A student gives the answer to a grammar exercise you are correcting and makes a pronunciation mistake.	1 ST 3 LT	1 ST 3 LT	12 ST 8 LT	1 ST 2 LT	5 ST 5 LT
6. A student reads a text aloud and makes a pronunciation mistake.	0 ST 1 LT	2 ST 0 LT	7 ST 7 LT	3 ST 6 LT	9 ST 7 LT
7. You are playing a language game to practice the present perfect and a student makes a mistake against a different grammar item.	3 ST 0 LT	4 ST 2 LT	3 ST 6 LT	7 ST 9 LT	5 ST 5 AT

The results in Table 8 indicate that there were many similarities between the two groups of teachers, as the majority of each group, highlighted in bold in Table 8, usually opted for the same solution. It also becomes apparent that the option of ignoring the error was seldom chosen, which suggests that some feedback on errors was generally considered necessary by the teachers, even though several teachers also chose the «it depends» option. A few teachers felt the need to clarify

their answers by explaining that they find it difficult to generalize and that their treatment of errors depends on several factors such as the proficiency level of the students or the aims of the activity. This is illustrated in the following examples:

- (11) *It always depends on the immediate objectives of the task in hand and how I feel this relates to their overall language competence.*
- (12) *In cases 6-7, it will depend on the student's level and the type of mistake.*

The results in Table 8 reveal that most of the teachers preferred not to interrupt students when they are expressing opinions, whether in whole class or pair work. In class discussions, it seems that most of the teachers would only provide feedback if the error might cause misunderstanding. When it comes to errors committed during pair discussions, the secondary school teachers' opinions were more divided, but hardly any of them would interrupt the students with feedback. The language school teachers, on the other hand, tended to agree on giving feedback at the end of a pair or group activity.

In the case of situation number 7, playing a language game, the opinions of the teachers varied considerably, even though the majority would also wait until after the game to provide feedback. The teachers were also rather unsure about how to deal with pronunciation mistakes made while reading aloud, as most of them opted for «it depends» in this case. On the other hand, if the pronunciation mistake is made during class correction of a grammar exercise, most of the teachers thought immediate feedback would be appropriate. Immediate feedback was also preferred by most of the teachers in situation 3, «a student asks a question in front of the whole class» and 4, «a student answers a question about a text you are discussing as a class». A possible reason for this is that the discussion of a text is seen as a more traditional, language-oriented activity, whereas giving one's opinion in a group or pair discussion might be seen by most teachers as a fluency-oriented activity in which interruption is not desirable. The teachers' belief in the importance of promoting fluency and their reluctance to interrupt students was already revealed by their answers to the open-ended questions (see IV.1). Two teachers repeated this idea in a comment on the closed-ended question about different classroom activities:

- (13) *In cases 1-2 giving feedback could sometimes interrupt an interesting discussion, so I just give feedback if the message is not clear to understand.*
- (14) *It is difficult to generalize in this area as my corrective feedback is generally repeating what they say in the correct form (passive correction) so most often it is immediate but without stiling communication.*

d) *Teacher beliefs on factors affecting their feedback practices*

Table 9. The teachers' beliefs about the influence of different factors on amount and type of CF

	Importance for <i>amount</i> of CF		Importance for <i>type</i> of CF	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	All teachers (n=46)	All teachers	All teachers (n=46)	All teachers
SS's level	3.12	1.03	3.41	0.76
SS's personality	3.24	0.76	3.30	0.80
No of ss	2.36	1.10	2.30	1.13
Programme	1.72	0.96	1.91	0.96
Time constraints	1.91	0.92	2.10	1.06
Type of activity	3.07	0.66	3.05	0.75

When we presented the teachers' answers to the open-ended questions about the importance of feedback and the teachers' beliefs about their students' reactions to feedback, it became apparent that for most of the teachers the question of how to deal with their students' spoken errors depended on a number of factors such as the aim of the activity, the type of mistake or the type of student, for instance (see IV.1). In order to establish which aspects of the teaching context teachers feel to have the greatest effect on their choices when giving oral feedback, six possible factors influencing teachers' decisions were identified based on previous research (e.g., Mori, 2011), and teachers were asked how important these were when they needed to decide how much and what type of feedback to provide. Two of these factors, as can be seen in Table 9, concern the students, whereas the others are the size of the class, the programme or syllabus that needs to be followed, time constraints and the type of activity. In the following paragraphs, the opinion of the teachers in general is reported, followed by a comparison of the language school and secondary school teachers' answers.

On a scale from very important to not important, the highest mean values were obtained for the student's personality, the student's English level and the type of activity, both for the choice of how much and what type of feedback to give (see Table 9). Therefore, these three factors were considered to be very important by the majority of the teachers. The number of students was only thought to be of limited importance, whereas the programme and time constraints hardly seemed to influence the teachers in their decisions about oral

corrective feedback. One difference which can be noted in Table 9 is that the student's personality was found to be more important than the student's English level when deciding how much feedback to provide, whereas the student's English level obtained a higher mean than the student's personality for the question about the type of feedback that needs to be given. This is consistent with the answers to the open-ended questions, where several teachers stated that the decision to provide immediate oral CF depends on the students and how confident they are perceived to be (see IV.1).

Table 10. Language school (LT) and secondary school (ST) teachers' beliefs about the influence of different factors on *amount* of CF

	Mean LT's (n=23)	SD LT's	Mean ST's (n=23)	SD ST's	Mann Whitney U	p-value (two-tailed)
SS's level	3.24	1.22	3.00	0.82	299.5	0.0989
SS's personality	2.85	0.75	3.59	0.59	104	0.0036
No of ss	2.18	1.18	2.55	1.01	294.5	0.2225
Programme	1.48	0.87	1.95	1.00	167.5	0.126
Time constraints	1.76	0.83	2.05	1.00	196	0.4009
Type of activity	2.91	0.68	3.23	0.61	302	0.1615

After considering the importance of these factors for all the teachers, possible differences between secondary school teachers' and language school teachers' beliefs were analyzed. Even though certain factors such as class size or the different ages and maturity level of the students might have been expected to have an influence on teachers, the Mann Whitney U-test results comparing the two groups of teachers did not reveal any significant differences between their beliefs as far as the impact of these factors on the type of feedback chosen was concerned (see Table 11), and only one significant difference in the case of the amount of feedback was found (see Table 10). As Table 10 shows, the secondary school teachers attached significantly greater importance to students' personality than the language school teachers. In fact, according to the language school teachers, the student's level was thought to be the most important influence on both the decision of how much and what type of feedback to provide, which means that the higher mean for student's personality for amount of feedback in Table 9 is due to the importance given to this factor by the secondary school teachers.

Table 11. Language school (LT) and secondary school (ST) teachers' beliefs about the influence of different factors on *CF type*

	Mean LT's (n=23)	SD LT's	Mean ST's (n=23)	SD ST's	Mann Whitney U	p-value (two-tailed)
SS's level	3.45	0.91	3.36	0.58	275	0.4473
SS's personality	3.18	0.91	3.41	0.67	269.5	0.5287
No of ss	2.14	1.17	2.45	1.10	197.5	0.303
Programme	1.86	0.94	1.95	1.00	253	0.8026
Time constraints	2.14	1.04	2.05	1.12	220.5	0.8103
Type of activity	2.95	0.72	3.14	0.77	203.5	0.3735

V. Discussion

These results indicate that, notwithstanding the difference in educational level, the English teachers working in secondary schools with teenage students did not on the whole profess different beliefs about oral corrective feedback from the teachers working in private language schools with adult students. The majority of the teachers believed their students expect to receive oral CF and also believed some amount of CF is useful. Indeed, survey studies taking into account students' beliefs have generally found that the vast majority of students would like to be corrected, preferably all the time (Jean & Simard, 2001; Schulz, 2001). The teachers thus seemed to be aware of students' wishes, but nonetheless disagreed with constant correction, as was also noted by Jean and Simard (2011). In their survey study of secondary ESL students and teachers, most of the students said they wanted to be corrected all the time, while most of the teachers opted for correcting students «only when they cannot make themselves understood» (Jean & Simard, 2011: 474). When looking at the types of errors teachers claimed to focus on, errors which impede communication were also thought to be more important than grammar errors by the teachers in this study (see also Basturkmen et al., 2004).

The reservations expressed by the teachers with regard to oral CF were related to two factors: students' emotional responses and the importance of fluency. The fact that teachers tend to connect the topic of oral CF to their students' emotional wellbeing has been noted in previous studies (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Yoshida, 2010). As mentioned in the Introduction, opponents of oral CF such as Krashen

(1982) and Truscott (1999) also refer to the danger of provoking negative reactions in students when correcting them. However, so far there have hardly been any empirical studies which show that students indeed feel bad when corrected, and that negative feelings about correction interfere with the benefits of CF.

As far as fluency is concerned, it might be that teachers are influenced by methodology courses, which tend to advise them to correct students when the focus is on accuracy, but not to interrupt them when the focus is on fluency, in more open-ended communicative activities (e.g., Harmer, 2006). When looking at how teachers claim to deal with errors during different classroom situations, we also noted that most of the teachers stated they would not interrupt students during group or pair discussions, while immediate feedback was thought to be more appropriate during accuracy-focused activities such as correcting a grammar exercise. However, nearly all experimental CF-studies have investigated the benefits of immediate oral CF, provided during communicative activities, and most of these studies were carried out within the framework of the interaction hypothesis and form-focused instruction. Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis states that language learners develop their second language proficiency through meaningful interaction with others, during which they receive feedback from their interlocutor. Form-focused instruction (e.g., Williams, 2005) applies this idea to classroom learning, which means that learners must be engaged in meaningful, communicative tasks, while at the same time their attention is drawn to specific language forms by means of CF. Whether or not immediate CF is compatible with fluency development still needs to be investigated, but immediate corrections do seem to be useful for second language acquisition, as the results of experimental research show (Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006).

With regard to CF-types, explicit correction was not thought to be very effective by the teachers under investigation, nor by the teachers in Cathcart and Olsen's (1976) study or the novice teachers in Rahimi & Zhang's (2015) survey (even though the experienced teachers in their study had more positive beliefs about explicit CF). On the other hand, recasts were thought to be more effective by secondary school teachers and elicitation by language school teachers. This preference for more implicit types of CF may be influenced by the aforementioned beliefs about not embarrassing students and not interrupting their «flow», as was also noted by Yoshida (2010). While some experimental studies have found positive effects of recasts for second language acquisition (e.g., Leeman, 2003; McDonough & Mackey, 2006), there is also evidence in favour of more explicit CF-types (e.g., Sheen, 2007; Yilmaz, 2012). Moreover, a survey study on Spanish students' beliefs about oral CF (Roothoof & Breeze, 2016) has shown that students preferred more explicit types of CF such as explicit

correction and metalinguistic feedback. It thus seems the teachers in this study may not be informed about recent research findings related to oral CF.

Even though there was high correspondence between the views of language school and secondary school teachers, a few differences were nonetheless observed. The secondary school teachers seemed to be slightly more positive about the need for oral feedback and the expected reactions from their students than the language school teachers. On the other hand, almost all language school teachers were sure that their students expect oral CF, while about half of the secondary school teachers did not think all of their students wished to be corrected all the time. The type of feedback that was rated the highest also differed, as the secondary school teachers tended to rate recasts as more effective, whereas the language school teachers rated elicitation higher than their colleagues did, and this last difference was nearly significant. With regard to the target of oral feedback, secondary school teachers were found to attach significantly more importance to pronunciation errors than language school teachers. Finally, although both groups of teachers appeared to agree on which factors influence them most when they decide how to treat a spoken error, the student's personality was found to be of more importance for the amount of feedback that should be given by the secondary teachers, while the adult teachers indicated that the student's English level is the most important factor influencing their choices regarding oral corrective feedback.

In order to find out the reasons for the observed differences between language school and secondary school teachers' beliefs about oral CF, we would need to conduct further research, for example by adding follow-up interviews to the research design. However, in general we can conclude that there are more similarities than differences between the two groups of teachers, and that the findings point to the need for further teacher training on oral CF. As mentioned earlier, it seems that teachers may not always be aware of the results of oral CF research. This study can be of interest to teachers, who may be stimulated to reflect on their own oral CF practices and beliefs. It is also hoped that studies such as this one inform teacher trainers, who need to be conscious of the need to deal with teachers' beliefs before attempting to impact on their practices.

VI. Conclusion

Survey studies on beliefs about error correction have mainly focused on the disagreements between students and teachers about whether or not spoken errors should be corrected. The present study has attempted to broaden our under-

standing of teachers' attitudes and beliefs about various aspects of oral CF such as the best way to correct, when to provide correction and which factors potentially influence choices made about how to deal with students' spoken errors. Moreover, as far as we know this is the first study which directly compares the views of language school teachers to those of secondary school teachers. It is also one of the few studies on teachers' beliefs about oral CF set in an EFL context. Despite the difference in educational level, both groups of teachers held very similar beliefs with regard to oral CF. While the vast majority felt oral CF is important, most of them also took into account their students' personalities, possible negative reactions to oral CF and the focus of the activity. Many of these teachers seemed to think that immediate CF is not compatible with a focus on fluency, although the opposite is claimed by proponents of form-focused instruction. With regard to CF-types, elicitation and recasts were thought to be the most effective by language school and secondary school teachers, respectively, even though the differences were not statistically significant. The only two statistically significant differences observed were that secondary school teachers thought it was more important to correct pronunciation errors, and that secondary school teachers attached more importance to students' personalities when deciding on amount of CF.

When considering these results, it needs to be kept in mind that they are based on data obtained from a limited number of teachers working in an EFL context in Spain. Future research may benefit from considering a larger and more varied sample of teachers. Moreover, data from survey studies need to be contrasted with data from other sources such as interviews or classroom observations.

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